

July 23, 2009

Visalia Convention Center
Hearing on the Draft EIR
Cross Valley Loop

I'm George McEwen, I reside at 22114 Boston Ave, Exeter, CA

I have 4 concerns with the Draft EIR:

- 1) 4.1-1a Highway 198 is the scenic corridor to the Sequoia National Parks. In 1925 the entrance to Exeter had an archway with a sign stating "Gateway to the Sequoia National Parks". We all know this beautiful view as we travel eastward towards Exeter. The EIR Mitigation Measure 4.1-1a states the visual impact is less than significant or Class 3. It shows a picture (Figure 4.1-7b) of a simulated view of the 160 foot towers. You can barely see these towers in the simulated picture. In real life you will be able to see them, and that will be significant. I believe this simulation is wrong and should be corrected to what it will actually look like.

I would also like to state at this time there is another simulated picture (Figure 4.1-11b) which was taken down the street from where I live. This picture shows a 35' power pole next to a simulated 160' tower. The simulated picture makes the 160' tall tower look 60' tall. This picture also needs to be corrected or omitted. By the way, these simulations were done by SCE.

- 2) 4.2-1a My second concern is soil compaction during construction. On the proposed route, we will have two towers on our property. The heavy equipment used to set these towers will undoubtedly cause severe soil compaction. This compaction will definitely affect any orchard or farm land. I don't need to know the broad mitigation measures in 4.2-1a. I need to know in detail how SCE is going to rectify this problem.
- 3) 4.2-5 The Draft EIR states the impact on the existing irrigation and other ancillary systems required for farming as less than significant or Class 3. Removal of wells to do this project may be very significant if the farmer cannot duplicate his existing well. Drilling a new well doesn't mean you will get the same productive well. That is to say, will the water table be at the same level, will the draw down be the same, or the gallons per minute be the same? This is easier said than done. And in certain growing areas, this may not be possible. Again, I believe growers who will be affected by this, need to know in detail how this will be rectified. In some cases this might be a Class 1, significant unmitigable. Route 3 will not have this water well issue, because the power lines were there before wells were drilled.

- 4) 5.3 Alternate Route 3, according to this report, has the least impact to agricultural land. And it would be the environmentally superior route except for the vernal pools in the Stone Corral Ecological Reserve. 5.3 states that this has significant unmitigable impact to the preserve. The EIR states that there is no way to go around it. Our P.A.C.E lines transmission consultant has developed a very good route around the preserve that does not effect housing and production agriculture. Part of this route uses an abandoned railroad right of way. Our consultant and 3 other members of P.A.C.E met with two representatives of the Department of Fish and Game. The opinion of the Department of Fish and Game was that it is feasible to reroute Alternative 3 around the preserve. Using this reroute will then make Alternative Route 3 the environmentally superior route.

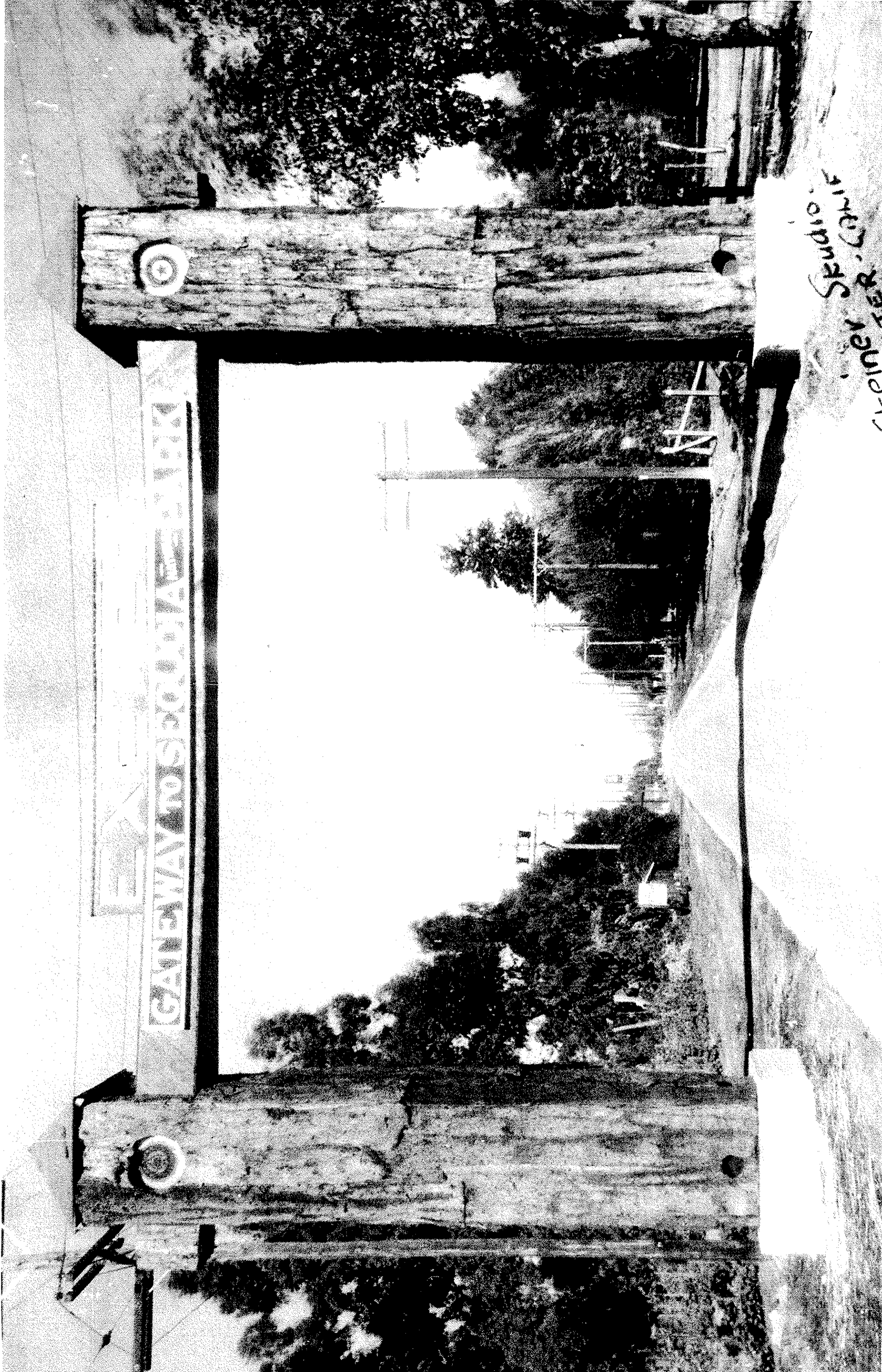
I'm sure there will be other concerns addressing the Draft EIR. The reality is that the project is needed and will get approved. The EIR is on the right track. It may not have addressed some issues completely. But it is trying to avoid impacts to our agriculture, our communities and to our environment. Using the existing right of way, that is, using the existing resource, and avoiding the vernal pools by going around them, is the best solution for this project. These lines have been here for almost 100 years. Yes, we have encroached upon them. But they were here first. And since they are almost 100 years old, they will be upgraded sooner or later with new singular poles and taller poles. The vernal pools will still be there. So, if you don't go around them now, you will have to go around them when the line is upgraded. In my opinion, it will be a lot less expensive if the upgrade is done now than 10 or 15 years from now.

Thank you for your time and consideration for my concerns with the Draft EIR.


George McEwen
22114 Boston Ave
Exeter, CA 93221
george@mcewen.com
559-804-4040 mobile/w voice mail

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GATEWAY TO SIOUXIA PARK

NEINER STUDIO
CANTON, CALIF.



This is a photograph of the Exeter Gateway to Sequoia National Park, located on what is now Highway 65, south of Exeter. It was a magnificent arch with a veneer of redwood bark. The arch crossed above the Orange belt Highway as it entered Exeter from the south. The Exeter American Legion sponsored the placing of the arch to entice visitors into the city on their way to the parks. Built in 1925, after World War I, the arch was built on a concrete base.